

MECHANICAL MEMORIES *MAGAZINE*

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The only U.K. subscriber magazine for collectors and enthusiasts of vintage coin operated amusement machines

Mechanical Memories Magazine

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Editorial

Hello again, and here we are with issue 5. It seems light years ago since the last issue, although it's only been about six weeks. It's been a really hectic summer at Brighton, and I'm looking forward to putting my feet up for a while! It was really good to see all of you who came down to see me at the museum, especially those who came for the first time. One particular subscriber showed me a picture of a mysterious machine that, as yet, I have been unable to identify. I'm hoping that this will make an interesting article for a future issue of the magazine.

At the time of writing, it's Saturday 2nd Sept. I've taken a day off from Brighton, due to bad weather, and have been working on the magazine all day, so hopefully it will be ready for printing on Monday. Actually, this is a bit of a land mark issue, as I haven't had to do much of the writing! Clive Baker gives an account of his vintage penny arcade on Southport pier, which I hope I will be able to visit sometime in the future. Only Clive could put together such an impressive collection of machines, and if you're within reasonable travelling distance, this must surely be a venue well worth a visit. Terry Selby's come up with another of his wonderful short stories, and Johnny Burley and Barry Saunders have both made contributions too. So many thanks to you all for lessening the work load for me this time!

I've got some good news on the auction front (see page 11), and hope to have full details for the next issue. In the meantime, mark 12th November in your diaries. It's been a while since we've had a slotties auction in the autumn, and being held in Coventry, should be accessible for most. So I hope this event receives a good level of support.

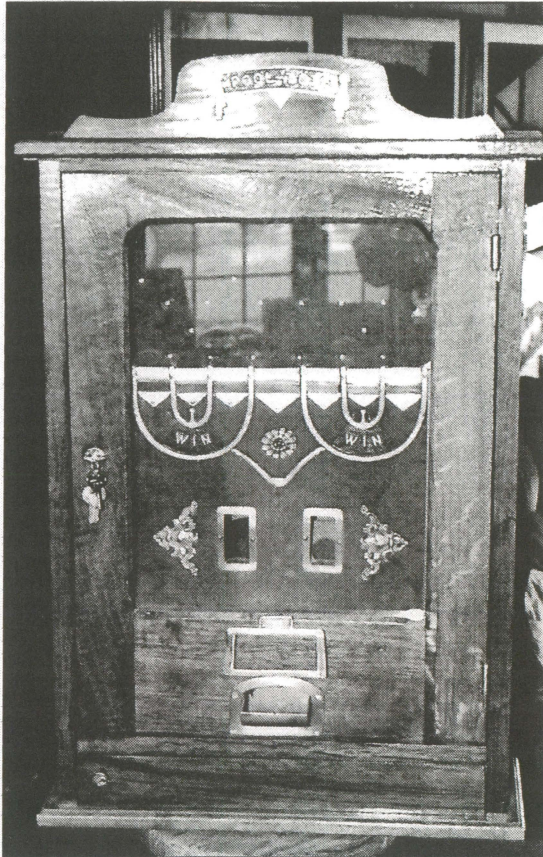
And finally, I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible in Brighton on the 23rd September for the Slotties day out (see page 10). Unfortunately, I haven't had any response from other operators with regard to organising a similar event in other parts of the country, so it will be just us southerners enjoying sunny Brighton!

Anyway, I'm off to put my feet up now!

All the best

Jerry

For Sale



Beautifully made copy of the 1920s POOL TOTE wall mounted or counter-top skill game. Limited edition, only six available. Made in solid oak, the player inserts an old penny and flicks it from the left with a finger to the winning targets. If the coin misses, it goes into the pool. If it hits, the pool is released automatically. They are great fun to play and very reliable, as we have overcome some problems with the original one we had. They are also very good money takers on site and have been well tested. Available for a very reasonable £600 each. Buy now, or regret forever! Phone Pete on 01295 730005

A short story about the making of

Pool Tote

I first came in contact with Pool Tote while helping Steve Hunt on his arcade. I helped him on his arcade many times and I was always amazed with the amount of people that played on the Pool Tote and how many coins that the machine had taken in a day. This was about twelve or thirteen years ago. It took me a couple of years to locate a Pool Tote, but I managed to buy one. After a few weeks of playing with the machine, I thought this would be a nice machine to copy.

I carefully stripped down the machine, and had a quote on the cabinets, which was a lot more money than I thought, but I ordered them. Over to the casters. Most of the bits are wax cast, and as there were about thirty moulds to be made, this would take a bit of time. But I should have them all within a few months. Little did I know that a few months turned out to be many years; many stories led to many years!

The cabinets had arrived made in solid light oak, he had made a very good job of them. Some of the stories I had from the casters were: he was too busy to do my bits; he wasn't busy enough; run out of rubber to make the moulds; run out of wax; run out of plaster; holidays etc. Anyway, I managed to get enough bits to complete nine. They are all up and running and for sale. I am keeping two for myself, I have sold one so the remaining six are now for sale at £600 each. I have used the Pool Tote on my arcade this year and it has been a great draw and a great money taker.

Pete

Southport Pier Arcade

A question of S'port? By Clive Baker

Southport? Where's that? It's between Liverpool and Blackpool. A bit posh as seaside resorts go, with a huge sandy beach, boating lakes, seafront putting greens, gardens and a famous main shopping street with Victorian colonnaded shop fronts and arcades. And Pleasureland, a fairground owned by Blackpool Pleasure Beach, on the seafront. Best of all, it has thousands of car parking spaces all along the promenade. Park for two pounds all day. You can even park on the beach itself.

What more could you want? How about a pier, three quarters of a mile long with a pier tram (£1 one way) taking you to a pier pavilion having a café and about sixty vintage old penny slot machines. Sounds OK? Can you play on them? You bet! Do they all work? Try them and see, and if there's a problem, collar 'the man with the keys'. He likes a chat, but don't show off 'cause you know more about the machines than he does.



The very rare Arnold's 'Know Thyself' palmist machine (I know of only one other). Clive says he's rather proud of this picture. At first glance, the woman appears to be gazing at the palm of her hand, but it's actually printed on the mirror of the machine.

So, what to bring with you. Firstly, a partner to impress with your self-restraint. If it weren't for your prudence and grasp on reality, your hobby could get the better of you and end up like this. Also, a partner is handy for beating on the strength and racing games, and humiliating on the games of skill. The 1920s monkey climb and Ahrens footballer *can* be played by one person, but solo ice hockey is so sad!

Bring along youngsters for 'Peppy' to amuse; to trawl for sweets on the giant crane and to race the baby Twins and the gee gees in the Grand National. Then scare them with the Haunted Churchyard, the Guillotine and the Laughing Sailor. Other family members will demonstrate how to win on the allwins, recall from previous encounters the wisdom of Madam Zasha and confirm Know Thyself's description of your true character from a reading of your palm. Bring a bag for all the sweets and Kit Kats you'll win on the crane and sweetie allwins. Load yourself down with the watches and bling from the 1930s six sided Waltonian. Stuff your wallet with photos of your future husband/wife or baby. You don't need to bring old pennies, there's plenty available at 10p each. Every machine is a penny a go.

What else should you bring? Your brolly (this is the north-west coast) and your rain coat; not that it's strictly necessary as the four mutoscopes and the Peerless Pictures viewer are rather tame these days. And bring your camera as you're sure to take better photo's than those shown here.

Open 11.00 am to 5.00 pm every day, including wintertime.

Have Fun.



Consulting Madam Zasha, a rare fortune telling automaton who will write your fortune card before your very eyes. (The fortune teller is the one without the earring).



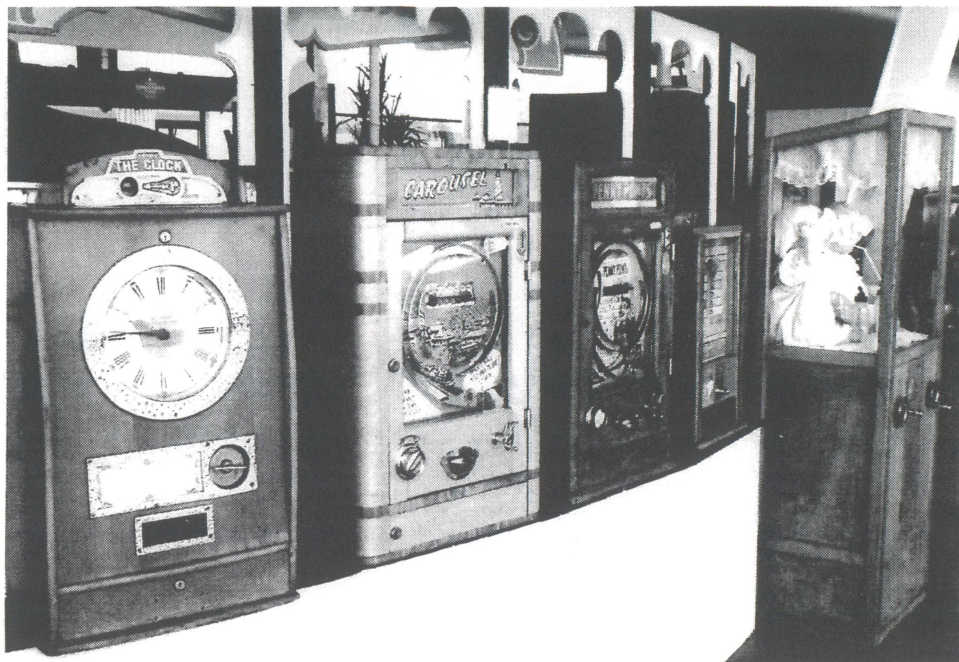
Another rare Arnold machine, the 1926 Monkey Climb two player race game. To the left, a side view of the Tarzan Passion Tester. And to the extreme right, the ornate cast iron stand from a Clam Shell Mutoscope. I wonder if Clive knows the 'Scope's gone!



Clive's most modern (and most rare) machine: Whitakers' 1988 Great Tram Race. Only a dozen were built, and this is the last one operating today. On the right of the picture can be seen the 1908 Mills' Owl Lifter, the oldest machine operating at Southport.



Ahrens' Prize Shooter, and to the right, the top box of the Streets' Tuck Shop.



*A selection of wall machines and The Twins on Southport pier.
Front cover picture, Clive loses more stock from his Win a Kit Kat allwin!*

Slotties' Day Out

I've chosen 23rd September for the slotties' day out at Brighton, which I hope will become an annual event. It will be a really informal affair; simply turn up at Mechanical Memories Museum at any time during the afternoon and have a chat with who ever is there at that time. You can have a look inside any of the machines that interest you, and old pennies to play them will be free! Come and go as you please, and then at about 6.00 p.m. we'll all meet up for something to eat, and then head for the pier for a few beers!

Mechanical Memories Museum is situated on the lower esplanade, at beach level, 50 yards west of the Palace pier (now re-named Brighton pier). I shall be open from about 12 noon.

Auction News

As some of you will probably already know, Jeremy Clapham is planning an auction for the autumn, to be held in Coventry on 12th November. Hopefully, this will be a great social event as well as a successful auction, and I wish Jeremy every success. I hope to have full details ready for the October issue of this magazine. In the meantime, here's an email Jeremy sent me a couple of weeks ago.

Midlands Slot Auction, Coventry, Sunday 12th November 2006

OK gang, I have hired a superb venue with good access from M1 & M6. A superb room with direct access onto a large car park for easy loading etc. A bar and food will be available. I want to provide a really good day out. A social event with auction and indoor sales tables. I don't want to make money from this, only to cover my costs. I want us all to have a good value day out.

So:

5% Buyers commission

5% Sellers commission

Cash only

Payout on the day

Entrance for two with catalogue £4

Additional entry £2 per head, aged 14 or over

Sales tables £12 (to include two free entries).

The venue is a very smart social and sports club, which will not tolerate selling outside in the car park or from backs of cars, and at these prices nobody should have to.

I have set up an email address..... covslotauktion@hotmail.co.uk

I'm asking those of you wishing to include items for the auction to mail me with details (what you're submitting and reserve if any). Alternatively, 'phone me on 07812 208115. This does not commit anybody at this stage, nor does it constitute a contract in any way shape or form. Circumstances are always changing, but this info. helps with the marketing. There is no cut off date for this, but I need to have an idea of what we're looking at by the end of September latest.

Cheers

Jeremy

Spend a Penny

By Barry Saunders

I guess most of us who enjoy collecting and using old amusement machines have them operating on old pennies. Before decimalisation on 15th February 1971, you could put your hand in your pocket and probably have all monarchs on coins going back to Queen Victoria. Do you remember how thin some of the Victorian Pennies were? They had travelled the length and breadth of Britain over many years. If only they could tell their tale! But the humble penny has a story all of it's own.

We were used to having pennies in our pockets which were minted between 1837 and 1967 which was the last mint year, apart from 'Farewell to £ s d' sets issued by the Royal Mint in 1970. We all have looked for the elusive 1933 penny. Only a very few were minted and in reality we are unlikely to find one. There was no requirement for pennies to be minted in that year, as there were plenty in circulation. However, the Mint received a number of requests for full sets of coins to be placed under the foundation stones of new buildings. The number of 1933 pennies minted was not recorded, but it is thought to be less than ten. Surviving examples can be found at: The Mint Museum; The British Museum; University of London, plus there are known to be two or three in private collections.

There are other features about the old penny that you may not be aware of. Firstly, each succeeding monarch faced in the opposite direction on the coin to their predecessor, a tradition going back to Charles II. However, King George V and VI both face in the same direction. This was caused by the abdication of Edward VIII. But had he not abdicated, Edward VIII would have faced in the same direction as George V, as Edward had a preference for portraits from the left. This break in tradition had been agreed by the Government and the Mint, before the abdication.

Also, not all pennies were minted by the Mint. There were two subcontractors: Heaton (H) and Kings Norton (KN). It is easy to identify these coins. H and KN pennies were issued in 1918 and 1919. H or KN can be seen to the left of the date. H pennies were also produced in 1912, and were issued in certain Victorian years where the H appears between and slightly below the centre of the year number.

If you are now going to reach for your penny collection to check them out, you can blame me for writing this article, which I hope you have enjoyed.

Barry Saunders.

Laughing Clown Bagatelle

By Johnny Burley

Although my vintage slot machine and fairground memorabilia collection has been scaled down in recent years, amongst the things I have hung on to is one of my prized possessions, an original ex amusement park Laughing Clown Bagatelle, manufactured by T.Haworth, Roseway Works, Lytham Road, Blackpool, complete with it's numbers board. From the 1930s to 60s, these were a popular feature at British seaside resorts. In banks or rows of perhaps a dozen on amusement park sidestalls, all attached to a crank rod which set the heads moving from side to side, Ping Pong balls being put into the open mouths, running down a funnel onto the numbers board to obtain a score.

This is one of the best examples I've seen, with no chips or cracks. I would like to think it was one of those that gave me so much amusement when I was a nipper in short trousers, on family holidays in Skegness in the 1940s and 50s. Pleasures were much simpler then.



No Respect

A short story by Terry Selby

"Oo's the kid that's moved into number forty-one with ole Mrs Weaver?" said Henry, not breaking his concentration from the task in front of him. "Blast! The bloomin' stuff keeps fallin' out the end!"

We were all sat on my front garden wall. Me, Henry, and Itchy Mulligan. "You'd better not let my mother catch you," I said. "Wouldn't it be better to leave it until we're up on the old common?"

"Yeah! I s'pose you're right," replied Henry. "I've gotta find a way of keepin' it in. Anyway, you ain't answered me question!"

"To be honest," I said, "I don't really know."

"I do!" piped up Itchy, living up to his name by trying to scratch one of his extremities. "'E started school on Monday. 'E's called Dennis an' 'e sits next to me in class."

"Do 'e" I mimicked, grinning, "and what else do 'e do?"

"I dunno!" said Itchy, "but I told 'im where 'e could usually find us if 'e wanted to."

"C'mon!" said Henry, "let's go on up to the common an' give it a try. I think I've managed to stop it fallin' out."

We got on our bikes and peddled off up to the old common. It was a large piece of waste ground that nobody bothered with. There were a few small trees dotted about, but it's main vegetation was a heavy compacted growth of gorse bushes, with the odd track here and there. Once you had managed to negotiate your way through this prickly assault course, keeping the scratches, cuts and tears to the minimum, you would eventually emerge out to small sandy clearings. Beyond these you were confronted by some cliffs, and provided you kept to the paths, reaching the top was no problem. In addition there were caves cut into the cliff face. To sum it all up this was a kids adventure playground, and apart from the odd dog walker, adults kept away. This is why we were there! To try out one of Henry's home made cigarettes.

"Pity the fair's all packed up and gone," said Henry. "Everythin's a bit dull now. Got a match?"

I struck a light. Henry puffed. "I know what you mean," I said, "but don't forget they're coming again in November. At least it's something to look forward to!"

"You're right there," said Itchy. "I went down every night and played on the slotters. One of the machines was playin' up and kept paying out when it weren't s'pose to. I played on it for ages 'til the attendant caught me and boxed me ears."

This was the first year the fair had made a visit in the summer, and it had proved very popular. "What's it like?" I asked Henry, whose face had now turned green.

"Fabulous!" he wheezed with his eyes streaming, "'ave a try!" I obliged.

"Phew! Not bad," I croaked, trying to focus my eyes. I could see two Henrys and two Itchys. "Your turn," I said, and handed the smouldering tube to Itchy. He took two

strong puffs and fell silent with a stupid wide grin on his face. He had lost his voice. "Well?" I said after a couple of minutes. I could just make out his response.

"Wow! What was in it?" he spluttered, wiping his eyes with a grubby handkerchief. "I felt like I was floatin' like a cloud."

Henry shrugged his shoulders. "Not much," he replied. "I pinched a bit of me Granddad's pipe tobacco, some tea leaves, and a few carrot scrapings. Oh! And some funny hairy seeds that me ole mum was drying out in the green 'ouse."

The next few minutes were taken up by Mother Nature rejecting Henry's concoction and forcing three small boys to suffer the unpleasantness of being violently sick. Mothers when seeing their pale looking offspring, took the precaution of sending them directly to bed, with the threat of the doctor if there was no improvement by the morning.

"Well! You didn't 'ave to try it," protested Henry, after I blamed him the next morning. "It weren't as if I forced you!"

It was then Itchy rode up on his bike, accompanied by the new occupant of number forty-one. "This is Dennis," said Itchy. "I said 'e could join us. S'all right innit?" There were no objections. It turned out that Mrs Weaver was Dennis's Gran, and he was staying with her for a period while his family were away travelling.

"D'yer like fairs?" said Henry. It all depended on Dennis's answer whether he would be accepted into our group.

"Love 'em!" replied Dennis. "They're great fun!" He was accepted.

The summer months rolled on and Dennis fitted in really well, enjoying all the activities that were on offer in and about our neighbourhood. One such place was the local park. The park was a wonderful recreation area that was enjoyed by young and old alike. From tiny tots feeding the ducks with stale bread, to others of more matured years demonstrating their skills on the Bowling Green. Of course, there were other pursuits to be indulged in, but the most popular of all was just having lazy days doing as little as possible. It was on one of these days, that the four of us were sprawled out on one of the park benches situated along the path. We were enjoying a late summer and October was approaching fast.

"D'yer know?" said Henry, taking a piece of old chewing gum from his pocket, "that the fair will be back soon! Cor I forgot I had that!" and began to pick out fluff, bits of bus tickets and a multitude of other foreign bodies from his newly found treasure. He popped it into his mouth.

"Yeah! An' I bin savin' up for it too," said Itchy, "'s not much fun if you ain't got no money!" We all agreed. We'd all been saving, ready for the fair.

"Oh blimey!" said Henry. "Look who's comin' down the path!" It was 'The Konge'

"Who's The Konge?" said Dennis.

"He's a nasty piece of work," I said. "He's a bully and a crook, and the less you have to do with him, the better! And I see he's got Spider Tucker with him."

The Konge was an enormous youth of about eighteen years of age, and was built like a brick out-house. Nobody knew how he got his name, and nobody cared. People just kept out of his way.

"Don't say nothin' when he passes," said Henry. "Just pretend he ain't there."

I am sure all would have been well, if at that precise moment of passing, Dennis hadn't sneezed. Unfortunately, it gave The Konge and his mate an excuse to stop and do a bit of terrorising at our expense.

"You insects got summat to say?" growled The Konge.

"Yeah! Summat to say," echoed Spider. (He was The Konge's yes man).

Spider was a very tall gangly youth without shape. He always put me in mind of a load of old wire coat hangers all tangled up together with clothes. He was also a coward, but enjoyed the protection of his master.

"Er, not at all Kongy," I stammered. "Dennis just sneezed, that's all!"

"Mr Konge to you!" he growled again. "You'd better show some respect or I'll 'ave to teach yer some manners."

"Yeah! Teach yer some manners," echoed Spider.

They continued on their way and I breathed a sigh of relief. We came out unscathed or we would have done! I don't know if Dennis did it out of nervousness, or if he had some sort of death wish, but to our horror he began to snigger.

"Shut up!" said Henry, "or he'll hear you." Too late!

The terrible two stopped in their tracks and returned. Spider had a leery smile on his face. "What's so funny?" demanded The Konge. "Oo dared to snigger?"

I was all for making a run for it, but the trouble was, our bikes were just out of reach and we wouldn't have got very far.

"It was me Mr Konge sir," blurted Dennis. "I didn't mean anything by it, honest!"

It was then panic took over. Dennis was stood nearest to the bikes, and he decided to try and make his escape. He might have succeeded if Spider hadn't been there. His long wiry limbs shot out like springs, grabbed Dennis including his bike, and propelled him to The Konge. Judgement and punishment was swift. I went across to help Dennis disentangle himself out of a bamboo thicket where The Konge's blow had sent him. His nose was bleeding and he was doing his best to fight back the tears.

"You didn't 'ave to do that!" shouted Itchy. "He meant no 'arm."

"Not enough respect," growled The Konge.

"Yeah! No respect," echoed Spider.

"Yuh gotta learn to accept yer punishment, and just to make sure, I think I'll confiscate yer bike." He picked it up from where it had fallen and began to walk away.

"Yer can't do that," said Henry, "it's stealin!"

Once again the terrible two stopped. "Tell yer what!" said The Konge, "Yuh can 'ave it back on a payment of a fine. Shall we say, three quid?"

"I ain't got that kind of money," said Dennis, his voice shaking. "Me Gran got me that bike!"

"Then you'll 'ave to say goodbye to it then, won't you?" sneered The Konge.

"Hang about!" I said. "We'll try and get the money, and we'll see you down here tomorrow, same time."

"Make sure that you do then!" he replied. "An' don't muck us about or you'll regret it. S'right innit Spider?"

"Absolutely," said Spider. "Dead right!" They went on their way laughing, taking Dennis's bike with them.

“ ‘Ow we gonna get three quid by tomorrow?” said Henry, digging into his pocket. “Look!” That’s all I’ve got, two rotten shillings!” The rest of us searched our pockets, and the grand total that we could muster came to just under five shillings, plus a couple of foreign coins and a brass washer.

“One thing’s for sure,” said Itchy. “We ain’t gonna do much with that!”

“Well thanks for tryin’ anyway,” said Dennis sadly. “You’re a good bunch of mates I’ll just ‘ave to accept that I’ve lost me bike.” We sat in gloomy silence.

“Er! There is one way,” I said, “but it’s going to be tough.”

The next day found us on the same park bench, at the same time.

“Go on! Once more,” said Itchy. “Count it again.” If we counted it once, we counted it twenty times. “OK” said Henry, one last time.”

We sat back and watched Henry place the last coin on the pile. “There we are,” he said, “three quid exactly. Now let’s ‘ope they turn up.”

The sound of laughter reached us coming from just beyond the bend in the path. The terrible two were on time to keep their appointment.

“ ‘Ave yer got it?” Sneered The Konge, “Only if you ain’t, it’ll be interesting’ to see ‘ow far I can chuck yer bike out in the lake.” Guffaws of laughter greeted us again, with Spider adding, “Yer never know, it might float!”

“No need for that,” I said gloomily. “We’ve got your money.” I passed over a large handful of mixed coins. The Konge snapped his fingers. Spider, as if on cue, took out a packet of cigarettes, lit one, and placed it between The Konge’s fat lips.

“Better all be ‘ere,” he growled through a cloud of blue smoke, “or I’ll ‘ave to ‘and out some more punishment!” A minute later he gave a grunt of which I assumed was his way of showing approval. He threw the bike at Dennis. “Let this be a lesson to yer to show respect,” he snorted. “Yer gotta way light this time!” They made their exit, sniggering and laughing.

“Thank goodness for that,” said Itchy. “I’m glad that’s all over with.”

“It’s not all over,” said Dennis. “They’ve just walked off with all your money that you’ve been savin’ up for the fair to get my bike back, but I’ll make it up to you an’ that’s a promise.”

November arrived and so did the fair. “It’s bigger than ever this time,” said Henry, and added, “not as though we’re gonna be able to enjoy it.”

“Thanks for reminding us,” I said miserably.

“Yeah! Thanks a lot,” muttered Itchy. “By the way! Where’s Dennis?”

“Visitin’ family I think,” replied Henry. “S’pose to be back in a couple o’ days.”

“Wish I was visitin’ family,” moaned Itchy, “then I’d be well away from the fair an’ not keep bein’ reminded of what fun we could be ‘avin’, and all cos ‘o they bullies!”

The week passed on and there was still no sign of Dennis.

“There’s only three nights left of the fair,” grumbled Itchy, sinking deeper into his week long depression, “an’ we ain’t bin nowhere near it.”

He was right. “OK! That’s it!” I said. “I reckon the best thing we can do, is that we go home and search high and low for any money we might have missed. Then we’ll

meet up this evening, and whether we got any money or not, we'll go down to the fair and at least have a look!"

The others looked at me somewhat surprised at my outburst, but it had the right effect. They both agreed, and were keen to try anything, rather than do nothing.

We met up after tea and the mood was much lighter. There were even a few smiles. Itchy was very smug. "Ow about that then?" he said triumphantly holding out a grubby palm showing two shilling pieces. "Did a deal with my little sister and her money box. I sold her my eighty three piece jigsaw puzzle."

"Funny sort of jigsaw puzzle," I said, "with eighty three pieces?"

"Well! It was a hundred," replied Itchy sheepishly, "but I lost the rest."

I shook my head, knowing there would be a price to pay when his mum found out.

"I managed to get sixpence," said Henry proudly. "I waited till everybody was out of the front room and then searched down the sides of the sofa. I could hear some coins chinkin' about but I couldn't quite reach 'em, so I pulled off some of the bottom an' got 'em that way."

"You'll be in trouble," I said, "when they see it."

"No I won't!" replied Henry. "I'll blame the cat!"

As for my contribution! I had managed to raise the paltry sum of fourpence, by returning two empty beer bottles that I had found at the back of our coal shed to our local Off Licence, and claiming the deposit. I very nearly never had that. The woman behind the counter said. "Look at the state of me 'ands!" and reckoned they should have been washed before taking them back.

"Well! It's better than nothin'," said Itchy. "At least we can play the slotters!"

We arrived at the fair and searched out the slot machines. It felt good to be amongst them again. The sound of a ball as it speeds around it's track. The clatter of coins discharging into payout cups, and the metallic smell that the pennies gave off when held in hot sweaty hands. Bliss!

Eventually, our meagre funds were all gone, but we had a good run and nobody complained. "Let's 'ave a look round before we go," said Henry, and then he stopped. "Oh crikey!" he retorted. "Quick! Duck back into the arcade!" We did as he instructed, but not sure why. "It was The Konge and Spider!" said Henry, peering out from behind some slot machines. "'Ave a look, but don't let 'em see you!"

He was right. The terrible two were heading over towards the Octopus, bargaining their way to the head of the queue. One or two unsuspecting souls, who didn't know them, protested at their behaviour, but all that got them was a bloody nose.

"C'mon! said Henry. "There's a lot of people about, so we should be able to keep pretty well hidden and out of their way."

Cautiously we crept down the steps of the arcade, and were greeted by a familiar voice. "'Ello me ole mates, 's good to see yer!" It was Dennis.

"Why didn't you tell us you were back?" I said. "We could have called round for you. By the way, have you seen who's here?"

"If yer mean them two great bullies," replied Dennis. "Yes I have, but don't matter about them. I'd like yer to come with me!" He had a big smile on his face.

We followed him through the fair, and out to where all the fair people had their caravans. Eventually, Dennis stopped by one that was far more elegant than the others.

"C'mon!" he said, walking up the steps toward the door. "There's someone I'd like you to meet."

We followed him inside and gawked at what we saw. It was all very posh and done out like a palace. Two people were sat at a table playing cards and enjoying a drink.

"Ere we are," said Dennis. "Come and meet me mum and dad!"

"Blimey!" said Itchy. "You didn't tell us your parents worked for the fair."

"They don't," he grinned. "They own it!" Once again we gawked.

Dennis's parents abandoned their game and asked us all to sit down, as they wanted to speak to us.

"So you're our Dennis's new mates then are you?" said his father, rising from his chair. "He's told us all about you, an' I like what I hear! Ain't that right mother?"

She nodded and began to explain. "You see boys," she said. "We spend a great deal of time travelling all over the country as you probably realise. So we have to make every effort to make sure that Dennis doesn't miss out on his schooling. That's why he's been staying with his gran. It gives him more chance to settle, rather than have to attend different schools. You do understand?" We assured her that we did.

"Right! Now down to business," said Dennis's father. "Am I correct in saying that you used all the money that you saved for the fair, to get our Dennis's bike back from a couple of thugs?"

"Er, something like that," I said

"Well! We're goin' to 'ave to do somethin' about it then! Ain't that right mother?"

She nodded. He walked across to a small writing bureau and took something out. "I think you'll find these useful," he said grinning, and gave us one each.

They were small golden cards that had the name of the fair printed on them with the words "Complimentary Pass" stamped in red letters. "These are only given out on rare and rewarding occasions," said Dennis's father, "an this is one of them! Ain't that right mother?" Without waiting for a reply he continued. "Now! All you 'ave to do is show the card, an' you'll be able to go on anything you want in the fair, for free! 'Ow does that sound?"

It was beyond our wildest dreams. To be able to enjoy all the fun of the fair without having to pay was almost unbelievable. After thanking Dennis's parents for their generosity, we left the caravan in a somewhat state of shock, but Dennis soon shook us out of it. "Well, come on then!" he said with spirit. "Let's start 'avin' some fun, and don't forget, them tickets is valid right up to Saturday night!" He chased off into the fair, with the three of us close at his heels.

"Innit gone by quick?" said Itchy as we peddled our way down to the fair for the final visit.

"It always does when you're 'avin' a good time," said Henry. He was right. We'd had a wonderful time. But it was now Saturday evening, and we were to meet Dennis for the last night of fun. We found him playing on the slot machines, chomping away on a giant toffee apple.

“C’mon you lot!” he said. “The fair’s goin’ tomorrow so let’s make the most of it, besides, it looks like rain!” We needed no second prompting.

It was Itchy that spotted them. “They’re ‘ere again!” he said, referring to The Konge and his mate Spider.

“Well, the fair’s closing up soon,” said Dennis, “an’ I reckon the weather’s gonna turn bad. We can play in the arcade an’ watch ‘em from there.” We soon got absorbed into the slot machines, and then Dennis said. “Look! They’re queuing up for the Big Wheel, an’ that’s given me an idea.” He scuttled off. A little while later he returned with a wide grin on his face. “That’ll fix ‘em!” he said. “My Uncle Jim operates the Big Wheel an’ he knows what to do.” We curled up with laughter when Dennis explained.

Sergeant Packer stared out of the window of the local police station and shuddered. The wind was howling and the rain was lashing down with a vengeance. A young constable came through the door carrying two cups. “Here’s your cocoa sarge,” he said. “What a filthy night. Glad we’re not out in that lot!”

It had been a quiet night apart from a couple of ‘phone calls. Just how Sergeant Packer liked it, especially on a night like this.

“By the way sarge,” said the young constable, dunking a biscuit in his cocoa, “we’ve had another ‘phone call. Someone complaining about a lot of shouting and hollering coming from the direction of the fair.”

“Huh! I can’t see that,” grumbled Sergeant Packer. “Fair’s been closed now for a couple of hours.” He walked across to the window and peered out. From his window, he could just about make out the Big Wheel and Helter Skelter against the darkened skyline. “No, there’s nothin’ over there,” he said, “sides, nobody in their right minds would be out in that weather tonight, that’s for sure. I reckon it’s drunks! That’s what it’ll be! Drunks!” The sergeant went back to his chair and cocoa.

If he had stayed at the window for just a little longer, he might have seen the moon appear briefly through a gap in the clouds, showing the Big Wheel silhouetted against the sky. And that wasn’t all. Trapped at the very top, sitting in one of the chairs, you could make out two figures with arms flailing desperately, in an attempt to seek attention.

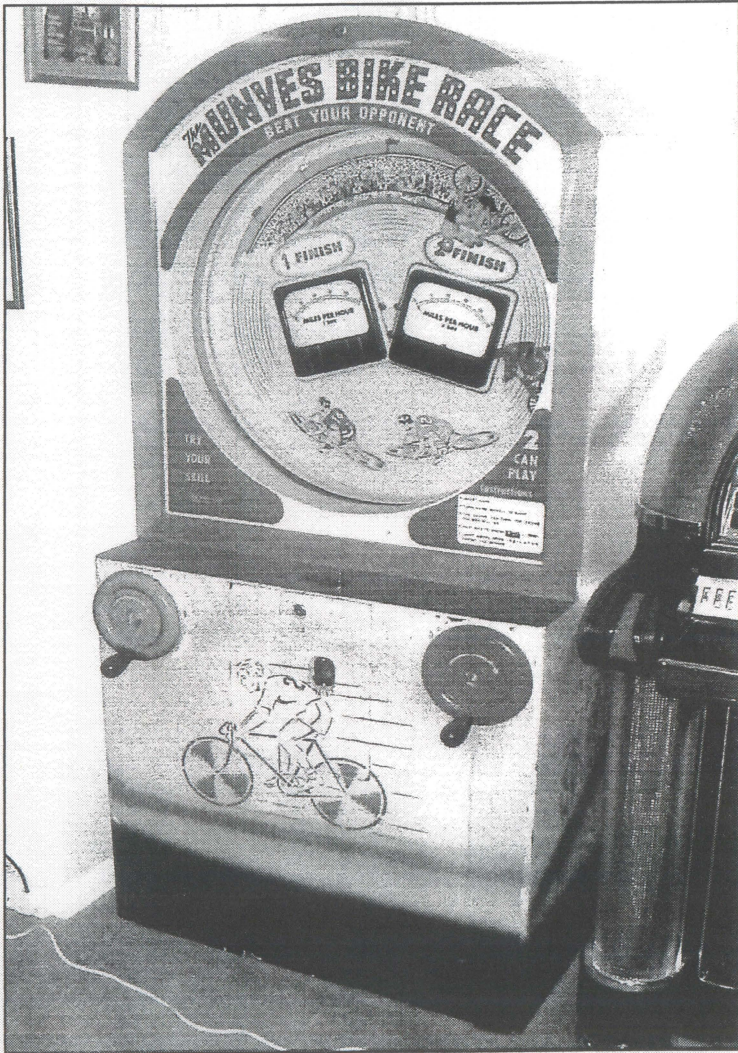
“So what do you suggest we do about it then sarge?” questioned the young constable.

Sergeant Packer sighed. Why were these youngsters so keen to avoid the quiet life? “Tell you what,” he replied. “If the weather improves, which I don’t think is likely, then you can ‘op on the bike, an’ go an’ ‘ave a look. Until then, get on with your cocoa, and pass me the biscuits.”

The young constable rubbed his chin thoughtfully. “I reckon you’re right sarge,” he said. “Dunks! That’s what it is! Definitely drunks! More cocoa?”.....

The End

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Ivan 07796 227612

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Tony 01622 820263

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Ken 0121 580 7840

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Andy 0208 527 1673

Email 1673andigspurs@yahoo.co.uk

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Wurlitzer Lyric Juke Box; Win a Polo on 1d play; Test Your Strength on 1/2d play; 24 cup allwin on 1d play; Challenger on 1d play; 6d Change machine; Mills 6d One Armed Bandit; Sunpat vendor; Beechnut vendor; Hi Lo Ace Pinball 1973; Brandt Junoir Cash machine; Old penny counter; Old shop Till; Advantage Pinball; Hawtins allwin; Parkers Carousel allwin.

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Ian 01428 713156

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Derek 0411 230 432 (Australia)
Email derek_j@optusnet.com.au

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Chris 01483 823203 (Surrey)

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Cheeky 07979 991169
Email tcsparky@hotmail.com

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Email dower57@aol.com

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